

### **Flu: Fact or Fiction?**

It's that time of year again. The air is crisp, the leaves are beginning to change, and you are being bombarded with flu vaccine messages. With so much information, how can you tell fact from fiction? The City of Newton Health & Human Services Department has provided this quick FACT or FICTION article to help you navigate this year's flu vaccine season! For more information, or to ask another question, contact us at (617) 796-1420.

**FACT or FICTION:** *The flu vaccine can give you the flu.*

**Answer: FICTION**

A flu vaccine cannot cause influenza because the viruses in the flu vaccine are either killed (flu shot) or weakened (nasal spray), which means they cannot cause infection. Some people may experience side effects from the vaccine including soreness, redness or swelling at the injection site, a low-grade fever or aches. The latter symptoms can sometimes be mistaken for the flu. Almost all people who receive influenza vaccine have no serious problems from it.

**FACT or FICTION:** *There is a shortage of flu vaccine in Newton this year.*

**Answer: FICTION**

The City of Newton Health & Human Services Department purchased flu vaccine for residents this year in anticipation of a reduced allocation from the state health department. The state is focusing its limited resources on uninsured residents and encouraging local health departments and other public providers to purchase flu vaccine. They also suggest that we bill insurance companies who now typically cover flu vaccine -- a practice we had already adopted in past years. Newton residents will be able to access ample flu vaccine through their health care providers, local pharmacies as well as City of Newton school- and community-based flu clinics. Visit [www.newtonma.gov/flu](http://www.newtonma.gov/flu) to learn more about flu clinics in Newton or call (617) 796-1426.

**FACT or FICTION:** *Flu vaccine is recommended for everyone age 6 months and older.*

**Answer: FACT**

Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine each year. This recommendation has been in place since 2010 when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended "universal" flu vaccination in the U.S. to expand protection against the flu to more people. While everyone should get a flu vaccine each flu season, it's especially important that certain people get vaccinated either because they are at high risk of having serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for people at high risk for developing flu-related complications.

- Pregnant women
- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- People 50 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
  - Healthcare workers
  - Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
  - Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)

FACT or FICTION: *Vaccines are the best tool we have to prevent influenza.*

**Answer: FACT**

A flu vaccine is the first and most essential step in protecting against the flu, according to the CDC. However, preventive measures like covering your cough (not with your hands!) and washing your hands often are important daily steps that can help stop the spread of germs like the influenza virus.

FACT or FICTION: *I have to wait until the day of the clinic to fill out my flu vaccine form.*

**Answer: FICTION**

Forms will be available in advance for the Adult Community Flu Vaccine Clinic on Oct. 12 at the Newton Senior Center from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., and for the Family Flu Clinic on Nov. 2 at Post 440 from 4 to 6 p.m. Paper copies of the form will be available in October at the Newton Senior Center (345 Walnut St.), Newton City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Ave.), and at the Newton Health & Human Services Department (1294 Centre St.). The form will also be available online at [www.newtonma.gov/flu](http://www.newtonma.gov/flu). It's important to provide accurate and thorough insurance information, so take your time and fill out a form in advance of the clinic. Bring it with you on the day of the clinic, along with your Medicare and insurance cards. Forms will not be collected in advance. If you don't have insurance, leave the insurance information blank, but provide your name and contact information. No appointments are needed for the clinic. If you have questions, call (617) 796-1420 or ask a staff member on the day of the clinic.

FACT or FICTION: *There are many places to get a flu vaccine.*

**Answer: FACT**

Newton residents have many opportunities to get a flu vaccine, including through your primary health care provider's office, local pharmacies and City of Newton school and community flu clinics. Some senior housing and apartment facilities are also hosting flu clinics. Check with your building manager to find out if a flu clinic is scheduled where you live. Find out in advance what to bring and if there is a fee by checking online or calling the clinic provider. Information about free City of Newton clinics is available at [www.newtonma.gov/flu](http://www.newtonma.gov/flu) and on the flu vaccine hotline at (617) 796-1426. In addition to the clinics on Oct. 12 and Nov. 2, flu vaccine clinics will also be held for students at all Newton Public Schools in October and November. School nurses will provide information to families about school-based clinics. An appointment only clinic for small children will also be held on Oct. 13 at the Newton Free Library. Call (617) 796-1420 to make an appointment.

### **Summary of City of Newton Clinic Dates**

All clinics are for Newton residents only

**Adults:** Oct. 12, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., Newton Senior Center, 345 Walnut St.

**Young children (under age 5) by appointment only:** Oct. 13, Newton Free Library, call 617-796-1420 to make an appointment

**Children and Adults:** Nov. 2, 4 to 6 p.m. American Legion Post 440, 295 California St.

**School-aged children:** Oct. 3 to Nov. 2 during the school day at each school.

Visit [www.newtonma.gov/flu](http://www.newtonma.gov/flu) for more information, or call 617-796-1426

Adapted from [www.Flu.gov](http://www.Flu.gov)